

# **Bayhealth and Beebe Medical Centers Each Awarded \$750,000 to Develop Rural Residency Programs**

DOVER – Bayhealth and Beebe Medical Centers have each received \$750,000 in federal grant funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to develop rural residency programs. HRSA awarded approximately \$20 million in Rural Residency Planning and Development Program (RRPD) grants to recipients across 21 states. The two health systems were among 27 nationwide that will receive up to \$750,000 over a three-year period to develop new rural residency programs while achieving accreditation through the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education.

The award comes at a time when the number of full-time equivalent primary care physicians providing direct patient care in Delaware is declining. That number declined about 6 percent from 2013 to 2018, according to a University of Delaware study of the primary care physician workforce commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS). In 2018, there were 815 individual primary care physicians practicing in Delaware, down from 862 in 2013.

“These funds will significantly help us strengthen the primary care workforce in Delaware, particularly the central and southern parts of the state,” said DHSS Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker, a board-certified family physician. “We need more primary care physicians to remain in practice and find ways to encourage new doctors, including those from minority and rural backgrounds, to choose primary care as their specialty.”

Another concerning trend shows a declining percentage of primary care physicians expecting to be active in five years, especially in Kent County. Kent has the highest percentage of physicians 65 and older (25 percent), compared with Sussex County (16 percent) and New Castle County (13 percent). Only 60 percent of primary care physicians in Kent County reported that they will be active in five years, compared to 70 percent in Sussex County and 78 percent in New Castle County.

“We are extremely grateful for, and excited about, the opportunities this funding provides for our state,” said Division of Public Health (DPH) Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “As demonstrated in Kent and Sussex counties, rural communities are more likely to have a shortage of health professionals. However, clinicians who train in rural settings are more likely to continue to practice there after they complete their residencies. This grant award will help us enhance the pool of long-term practicing physicians.”

The Rural Residency Planning and Development Program (RRPD), administered by HRSA’s Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) and Bureau of Health Workforce (BHW), is part of a multi-year initiative by HRSA to expand the physician workforce in rural areas by developing new, sustainable residency programs in family medicine, internal medicine, and psychiatry. Rural residency programs often face challenges in securing sustainable financing and faculty support. The RRPD grant award funding will help recipients address these challenges.

Both Beebe and Bayhealth have chosen to focus on family medicine in their residency programs. The Bayhealth program will include six residents per year and the Beebe program will include four residents per year.

“We are thrilled to have been awarded this grant from HRSA. This grant will be used to continue our promise to deliver the nation’s best health care here at home,” said Bayhealth

President & CEO Terry M. Murphy, FACHE. "As we look toward our future at Bayhealth, our medical education programs are an investment not only in Bayhealth's future, but in the future of each community we serve."

"We are excited as Beebe embarks on another transformative journey and begins looking at providing medical education and training programs to doctors," said Beebe Medical Group Senior Vice President/CMO, Bobby Gulab, MD, MBA. "This will also allow us to keep more of these doctors in the area and continue to meet the needs of the community. I have no doubt Drs. James and Richard Beebe would have been very proud of the steps Beebe is taking to help our community and to provide medical education to doctors."

"Bayhealth and Beebe Medical Centers are both vital sources of care for many Delawareans," said Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester, a member of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health. "This grant will expand the primary care physician workforce in Sussex and Kent counties, which will allow us to reduce some of the barriers patients experience when seeking medical care."

"Delaware and states across the country are grappling with a shortage of primary care physicians in rural and underserved areas," said U.S. Senator Tom Carper. "As we continue to look for ways to increase access to quality, affordable health care to everyone no matter where they live or how much money they make, this federal grant will go a long way to attract and retain primary care physicians to Delaware where we need them the most."

"We're facing a projected shortage of primary care physicians in our country, particularly in places like Kent and Sussex counties. The number of older folks who will need access to quality health care is also predicted to double in the next twenty years," said U.S. Senator Chris Coons. "The Rural Residency Planning and Development Program is one of many

initiatives supported by Congress to address these shortages while supporting medical centers like Bayhealth and Beebe.”

Both Kent County – 2,069 patients per primary care physician – and Sussex County – 2,014 patients per physician – are above the 2,000-to-one ratio used by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to designate shortage areas.

To review a complete list of all grant recipients, visit [www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/rural-residency-planning-development](http://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/rural-residency-planning-development).

For more information about rural health policy issues, visit <https://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/index.html>.

*A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.*

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.